

SEP 13 1951

BALTIMORE SUN A.M.

Circ.: m. 176,946
S. 309,927

Page: EDITORIAL

Baltimore Sun

The New Defense Secretary

Back in 1943, when Robert A. Lovett was Assistant Secretary of War for Air, someone said of him, "There's not a more respected man and better liked man in Washington." The unanimity with which he has been hailed as successor to General Marshall as Secretary of Defense suggests that he has lost none of his popular appeal in the last eight years.

In 1938, the year of Munich, our Army boasted only 1,773 planes and an air personnel of 2,079 officers and men. Mr. Lovett took office as air secretary in 1940. By 1942 this country was producing 30,000 pilots a year and 47,000 planes. The Air Corps increased to 2,225,000 officers and men. Mr. Lovett disclaimed personal credit for this phenomenal growth. He called attention to the contributions of Secretary of War Stimson, of General Marshall, then chief of staff, and General Arnold. Yet Mr. Lovett headed this particular department and others attributed much of the achievement to his leadership.

In 1945 Mr. Lovett retired to New York to resume his profession as an investment banker. But he was back in Washington in 1947 to serve under General Marshall as his Under Secretary of State. He went out of office with Marshall in 1949 and came back at the latter's request when the General was recalled by President Truman to become Secretary of Defense. In all the public offices he has held Mr. Lovett has given general satisfaction. What is the secret of his success?

Those who know him well say that, to begin with, he has a first-class mind. He took a B.A. at Yale, then went on to Harvard to do graduate work in law and business administration. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa. Added to that is personal courage. He served as a bomber pilot in the navy Air Corps in World War I, won a Navy Cross and came out a lieutenant commander.

His colleagues describe him as being thoughtful, highly intelligent, thorough and tenacious. General Arnold once attributed his outstanding ability to "his business background and his aviation background, plus plenty of good sound horse sense." While he was in college he once did some intensive research work for a paper on Shakespeare which astonished his fellow undergraduates. One of them remarked that he didn't believe Bob was particularly interested in Shakespeare. "It's just that when he starts to find out something about anything, boy, he finds out everything!"

Numerous instances have been cited to show his enthusiasm for any problem, from helping a friend with a cold to expanding the nation's Air Force. "He was a fool for anything insoluble," said one of his friends. Apparently he still is. He has been described also as "just lapping up disaster."

Fortunately for a man in public life in Washington today he has a sense of humor. He once described the organization of the old Army Air Corps when he first found it as being like nothing so much as a bowl of spaghetti. Lovett's taste in neckties is somber. Asked by Gen. Walter Bedell Smith if he would wear a gay necktie were one supplied him he said he would. General Smith sent him one decorated with dancing hula girls. Lovett lived up to his agreement. But he wore the necktie only once. He said having the hula girls under his chin took his mind off his work.

Those who have served under Mr. Lovett say he has a remarkable faculty for getting people to work for and with

him. He soon has them thinking he is "the greatest guy" around. It is not done by idle flattery. He gives his subordinates full credit for their contribution, but only after he has been convinced they deserve it.

His associates believe that his magic charm rents on the simple fact that he is modest, and forthright, that he is not self-seeking and that he has no ax to grind. While he is naturally genial, he can be tough when need be and never more so than when he has found somebody trying to chisel on Government contracts.

As an old airman Mr. Lovett has been an enthusiastic supporter of that arm of the service. Testifying before a congressional committee he once declared that air power "is about as cheap a way of buying national security insurance as there is." He added for good measure, "Nothing is more dangerous than a one-shot air force." His sympathy however accompanied by a certain sensible restraint.

One observer, summing up his outstanding traits, marked him as being "experienced, sensible, respected, popular, informed, smart, gentle, tough, mean and considerate." From this group of virtues Mr. Lovett ought to come up with the right quality for whatever problem confronts him.

F. F. B.